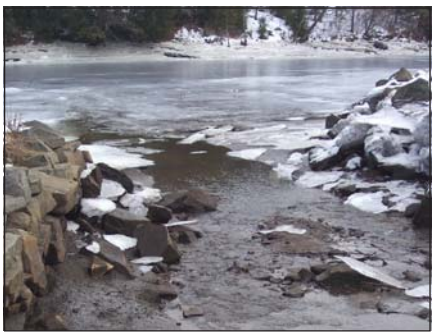
WINTER/SPRING 2006

Tidelines

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COASTAL PROGRAM

CELCP Process in Motion

NHCP submitted three land protection project proposals to NOAA in late December 2005 for consideration for funding from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). The program, which was established in 2002 by Sen. Judd Gregg in coordination with state and federal land conservation experts, gives priority to lands that can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological value. CELCP requires a one-to-one match from all applicants.



Winter on the Lamprey River.

NHCP received 11 project proposals requesting CELCP funding, totaling $13 million to protect 4,300 acres of land in the coastal zone and watershed. In the past, funds for the CELCP

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Unwelcome Visitors

A Threat to Salt Marshes

It's worse than house guests staying past New Year's. Invasive plants, or plants that are not historically from New Hampshire, continue to threaten local salt marshes.

During this coming year, invasive plants like common reed and common buckthorn, which take over large areas where native plants normally thrive, will be removed from four properties in the coastal zone. This removal work brings together the funding and technical expertise of more than ten partners, and is the first step in a multi-year effort to control invasive plant species stubbornly rooted in New Hampshire's salt marshes.

*Common reed (*Phargmites australis*) is one of the most common invasive plants in New Hampshire salt marshes.*

The project began last winter when Ted Diers, Coastal Program Manager, and Alan Amman of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), pulled together a group of stakeholders with interest and experience in invasive species removal in New Hampshire's coastal zone. The goal was to bring together landowners, municipalities, nonprofits, conservation commissions and agencies to raise awareness of invasive plants and develop a long-term plan to restore native plants to salt marshes. Work involved selecting and prioritizing sites, mapping areas affected by invasives, and coming up with a management plan for each property.

The properties are located in North Hampton, Rye, New Castle and Dover. Additional properties will be incorporated. So far, the selected sites have all been on land owned by municipalities or nonprofit groups. NHCP and partners hope to interest private property owners in future participation.

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NH Coastal Program

Ted Diers
Program Manager
(603) 559-0027
tdiers@des.state.nh.us

Cathy Coletti
Outreach Coordinator
(603) 559-0024
ccoletti@des.state.nh.us

Beth Lambert
Coastal Restoration Coordinator
(603) 559-0022
blambert@des.state.nh.us

Dave Murphy
Grants Coordinator
(603) 559-0021
dmurphy@des.state.nh.us

Mary Power
Executive Secretary
(603) 559-1500
mpower@des.state.nh.us

Sally Soule
Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program Coordinator
(603) 559-0032
ssoule@des.state.nh.us

Chris Williams
Federal Consistency Coordinator
(603) 559-0025
cwilliams@des.state.nh.us

IN PORTSMOUTH:
NH Coastal Program
50 International Drive, Suite 200
Pease Tradeport
Portsmouth, NH 03801
(603) 559-1500

IN CONCORD:
NH Coastal Program
Dept. of Environmental Services
PO Box 95
29 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03302-0095

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Cathy Coletti, writer/editor
Pat Gruttemeyer, layout/design

Manager's Musings: The Coast in 2005

By Ted Diers, Coastal Program Manager

As we begin 2006, like many of my counterparts across the country, I count my blessings that 2005 did not bring to us the destruction wrought by the hurricanes in the South. Unlike the coastal program staff in Mississippi, who had eight feet of water rush through their offices, we continued the ebb and flow of normal work days. Not that 2005 was without incident – we had the worst red tides in recent memory, which effectively shut down all of our shellfish beds. This year will also be remembered as one of the wettest on record. We had major Nor'easters in the spring and fall, which played havoc with the sand on our beaches (not to mention sand in the parking lot and roads in Hampton).

The year had its high points as well. The Coastal Program began a new partnership to deal with invasive plants. The Blue Ocean Society, NHCP and volunteers celebrated a successful International Coastal Cleanup Day in September with over 20 beach cleanups in New Hampshire, and the creation of the *Trashformation*, artwork made out of some of the collected materials. The Coastal Program also initiated a dialogue on offshore wind energy for New Hampshire stakeholders, taking a proactive approach to exploring these types of ocean issues.

In our last edition of *Tidelines*, we reported on a number of policy initiatives at the federal level. As often happens in policy-making, the wheels of motion have slowed to a crawl. The important Coastal Zone Management Act reauthorization was approved by the Senate, but stopped short in the House. Despite support from both sides of the aisle all across the country, this is not a priority for House leadership. On the positive side, the FFY 2006 NOAA appropriations bill included funding for coastal management that was level with the previous year, and coastal nonpoint pollution programs will continue to be funded.

Last year, the Senate Commerce Committee directed NOAA to create a national priority list for coastal land protection. NHCP selected three important projects for inclusion on that list. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) has been scheduled for subcommittee hearings in Sen. Sununu's National Ocean Policy Subcommittee this spring. Last year, Sen. Gregg introduced a bill that would make CELCP permanent. In addition, Sen. Sununu will be taking on issues such as ballast water and aquaculture in the spring. With our senators taking leadership in coastal and ocean policy, we have the unique opportunity to influence the national debate. Although small in size, New Hampshire brings a rational and civil outlook to coastal management issues.

This issue of *Tidelines* has a bit extra: an Annual Report inset. Another year has gone by, and we'd like to share with you some of the progress we and our partners have made.

We hope you come away from this publication with a feel for how much is going on in New Hampshire in the area of coastal management, and maybe get a few ideas of your own.

Steps Offshore

According to *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century*, released a little over a year ago by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, there is a need for authorities to coordinate on coastal and ocean policy issues, including offshore resources. Improved communication and coordination would enhance the effectiveness of the nation's ocean policy, according to the report.

"By getting out ahead of this early and identifying key issues and stakeholders, we are also ultimately better serving the public."
~ Chris Williams, NHCP

Nationally, offshore resources are poorly understood while at the same time offshore areas are becoming more and more appealing to economically driven activities, like wind farms and aquaculture facilities. Offshore uses include dredging projects, marine protected areas, fisheries, and recreational activities. Conflicts arise when multiple activities take place in the same area.

NHCP has taken the first step in bringing together state and regional stakeholders to coordinate on offshore issues. Seventeen stakeholders in and around New Hampshire attended the N.H. Coastal and Ocean Wind Energy Meeting hosted by the Coastal Program in October. Attendees came from DES, the Public Utilities Commission, the University of New Hampshire and other groups. They heard about wind energy permitting issues from representatives of the American Wind Energy Association, DES, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management.

"Since New Hamsphire's federal consistency review process relies on the expertise of other state agencies, we wanted to put this on their radar and begin a dialogue. By getting out ahead of this early and identifying key issues and stakeholders, we are also ultimately better serving the public," said Chris Williams, NHCP Federal Consistency Coordinator.

Feedback is currently being generated from participants and additional stakeholders on where to go from here. A problem cited in *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century* is the lack of information on which to base decisions. One idea is to collaborate on an offshore mapping project to assess offshore resources and uses. Information on fisheries, lobstering areas, underwater pipeline locations, shipping routes, recreation areas, migratory bird routes and other uses would be pivotal to contributing to our offshore knowledge base and in determining the impacts of a potential offshore wind energy site.

Visit the Coastal Program website at www.des.nh.gov/Coastal/ to view the speakers' presentations.

CELCP

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program have been exclusively allocated through the congressional appropriations process. However, the 2006 appropriation bill called for NOAA to create a national priority list for CELCP appropriations. In turn, NOAA required each Coastal Program to provide three project proposals to compete on the national level.

Staff ranked each project proposal using the CELCP criteria and ranking system, taking into careful consideration the projects' ability to compete nationally. On December 19, 2005 NHCP hosted a public meeting to discuss the ranking and final consensus of project proposals requesting funding from CELCP.

The top three ranked proposals were the Coastal Headwaters project, submitted by the towns of North Hampton and Greenland and the Seacoast Land Trust, which would protect 465 acres of sensitive watershed in Greenland and North Hampton; the Salmon Falls Headlands project, submitted by the N.H. Department of Fish and Game and the Forest Society, which would protect 345 acres in Milton and 146 acres in Middleton; and the Exeter River Corridor Conservation Initiative submitted by the town of Brentwood and the Trust of Public Land, which would protect 158 acres of land and help complete a protected greenway along the Exeter River.

NHCP has a partnership with the N.H. Estuaries Project, the Forest Society, The Nature Conservancy, and the Strafford and Rockingham Regional Planning Commissions to create a CELCP Plan and process that will be used to identify projects eligible for CELCP funding for FFY08 and beyond.

Unwelcome Visitors

continued from page 1

Removal of invasives began at the property in New Castle last fall, however follow-up work and monitoring for this and the other locations will continue for the next 12 years.

"Invasives are not something that you can treat and then you're done. They require long-term management," said Beth Lambert, NHCP's Coastal Restoration Coordinator.

"Invasives are not something that you can treat and then you're done. They require long-term management."

~Beth Lambert, NHCP

Over the last 15 years, a variety of partners have worked together to restore more than 600 acres of degraded salt marsh and other habitats on the New Hampshire coast. Most of these projects involved returning tidal flow to the marshes by replacing culverts or removing fill. However, invasive plants continue to place pressure on coastal ecosystems.

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) is one of the most common invasive plants. It spreads rapidly, creating monocultures and displacing native salt marsh vegetation crucial for birds and other wildlife. Other problematic species include Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), a vine/trailing shrub that smothers native plants and harms trees, and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), known for displacing food and cover plants valuable to waterfowl. Still others include non-native species of honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*), which shades out native plants and depletes the soil of nutrients, and glossy and common buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*), which create dense, evenly aged stands, displacing native plants and preventing their regeneration.

NHCP has taken a lead project role by coordinating partner meetings, securing additional funding to implement the management plans, and overseeing contractor bids and removal work. Partner roles include funding, project planning and fieldwork. NRCS staff used a global positioning system, or mapping technology, to record locations and map the invasive species areas on the four properties to aid in project planning.

Funding partners include the NRCS, Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, New Hampshire Estuaries Project, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Other partners are the Rockingham County Conservation District, New Castle Conservation Commission, Audubon Society of New Hampshire, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and The Nature Conservancy. The towns of New Castle and Rye contributed in-kind services and funding for projects occurring within their respective town.

Looks can be deceiving. Although often pretty, invasive plants cause big problems for native species. From top to bottom: common reed, common buckthorn, purple loosestrife and oriental bittersweet.

Septic Scenes

A variety show that helps you live with your septic system will air shortly on community access television channels in the Seacoast.

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) recently sponsored a contest to find the best original two- to five- minute videos that educated people about their septic systems. The winning video is "Your Septic System, Your Friend," submitted by John Shore of Portsmouth and Dina Sutin of Manchester. The film-making duo crafted a four-and-half-minute video that included a news parody, an animated scuba diver in a septic tank, and a septic system music video.

Final production of the 30-minute Septic Scenes show will include clips of the five submitted videos. The variety show concept is one that project coordinator, Dave Kellam, believes will bring the septic system issue to the widest possible audience.

"It seems everyone thinks of septic systems in a different way. Some people think about the environmental impacts, while others worry about the cost of replacing a failed system. Most of us don't think about septic systems at all. By packaging a variety of viewpoints into one entertaining television program, we are likely to hit upon an issue that will motivate landowners to take care of their septic systems," said Kellam.

Failing and overloaded septic systems are major sources of pollution in New Hampshire's lakes, streams, estuaries and groundwater. Pollutants, like bacteria and excess nutrients, can harm aquatic life, cause unsightly algae blooms, close shellfish beds, and pose a threat to human health. Most of the pollution problems can be avoided by pumping out a septic system every three years and being careful not to overload or damage it.

For additional information on the NHEP Septic Scenes variety show, go to www.nhep.unh.edu. For more information on septic systems and repairs, please call the DES Subsurface Systems Bureau at (603) 271-3501. For more information on water quality, contact the DES Watershed Assistance Section at (603) 271-7889 or visit www.des.nh.gov/gw/gw0405.htm.

Gulf of Maine Council Corner

You may have noticed that the "Gulf of Maine Council Corner" is a regular feature in *Tidelines*. But just what is the Gulf of Maine Council?

It is a US-Canadian partnership working to maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations. The governors and premiers of the five Gulf jurisdictions – Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia – created the Council in 1989 as a regional forum to exchange information and engage in long-term planning. Some of the Council's projects include grants and award programs, the Gulfwatch monitoring program, the *Gulf of Maine Times*, and science translation to management projects. For instance, last year the Gulf of Maine produced the *Gulf of Maine Habitat Primer*, a publication targeted to coastal decision-makers, which provides an overview of the Gulf of Maine's coastal and offshore habitats.

How is the Gulf of Maine Council organized?

With no central office, the Council is administered through an annual Secretariat, which is currently Maine, and rotates among the jurisdictions. The Council is made up of leaders of state, provincial, and federal agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector. In addition to the Councilors, numerous members participate in the Council's Working Group and Committees, including the Coastal Program and other DES Watershed Management Bureau staff. Several contractors also work with the Council.

Where is the Gulf of Maine?

The coastlines of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia make up the Gulf of Maine. The area is one of the world's most biologically productive environments. Ocean currents control temperatures and bring nutrients and food to the thousands of species of plants and animals that occupy the rich undersea terrain.

Spotlight on Hampton

Incorporated: 1639

Population: 14,937 (2000) However, on any given summer day, there are between 60,000-100,000 people in Hampton!

Projected Population 2020: 18,180

Total Square Miles: 14.2

Major Waterbodies: **Hampton River** is a wide, tidal river within the Hampton Seabrook Marsh and Estuary. It is heavily used by recreational boaters and fishers. **Tide Mill Creek, Nudds Canal, Blind Creek, Nilus Brook, Eel Ditch, Meadow Pond, Taylor River, Blackwater River,** and **Old Mill Pond** are additional watercourses in town. **Hampton Harbor**, located on the south side of Hampton Beach along the Hampton River, is an inlet from the Atlantic Ocean formed by the confluence of the Hampton and Blackwater Rivers. The harbor is a popular place for recreational boating and commercial fishing.

Outstanding Features: At 5,000 acres, the **Hampton Seabrook Marsh** is the largest marsh complex in New Hampshire. Partially located in Hampton, it provides plant and animal habitat, including habitat for rare and endangered species, offers flood protection for adjacent uplands, and plays a role in the production of fish and shellfish. Built in 1723, the **James House** is the earliest surviving example in New Hampshire of the three-post framing method, which became the standard for two-story center chimney dwellings in the region. All of its original framing remains intact. The James House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. **Hampton Beach** is approximately 1.2 miles long and includes Hampton Beach State Park, which has public parking and a bathhouse. The close proximity of retail shops, restaurants, hotels, and rental properties make Hampton Beach extremely popular with beachgoers in the summer months. It is also home to the Seashell Stage, where special events take place throughout the summer. **Hampton Harbor and State Marina** provides access to Hampton River and surrounding water bodies. Several businesses, including whale and fishing charters lease space at this location. **North Beach** is approximately 1.4 miles long, but has few dry sands at high tide. The surrounding area is mostly residential with a few small businesses. Surfing is a popular activity at this beach.

NHCP projects: In **2005-2006,** Coastal Program funds will help fund the purchase of a **Vac Truck,** which will replace the outdated machine currently used to clean over 2,200 catch basins in town. During **2003-2005,** NHCP funds assisted the continuation of restoration work on the **James House,** a rare first period house, and also enabled onsite archeological surveys and artifact organization. In **2003/2004**, NHCP coordinated the removal of surface sediments to correct marsh elevations as a part of the **Meadow Pond Salt Marsh Restoration**. The Coastal Program also coordinated the construction of a new tidal creek system and open water habitat. Salt Meadow Pond Marsh is located on the northern extremity of the Hampton Seabrook Marsh near a highly developed barrier beach system. In **2001**, Coastal Program funds were used to help fund the **Hampton Beach Area Master Plan**, which was a joint project of the town of Hampton and the state. It created a plan to enhance the environmental, recreational and economic value of the area, using substantial public input.

Skip Webb of the James House Association stands before the historic Hampton landmark, which was built circa 1723.

Successes: Over 155 acres of **Hurd Farm**, which straddles the Taylor River in

Hampton, *continued on next page*

Hampton

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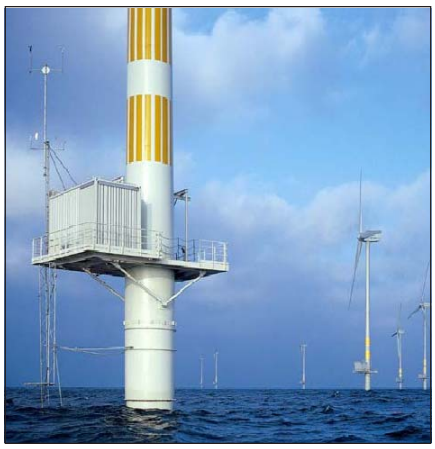
Hampton and Hampton Falls, is permanently protected for farmland, water quality and open space. The property is a working dairy and composting farm. Although the land remains in private ownership, an agricultural preservation agreement over the property guarantees that the most important farm soils will never be developed. A water quality and recreational preservation agreement on the lands along the river will protect water resources and provide for permanent public recreational access. The agreements are held and monitored by the Rockingham County Conservation District. Funds for this project were assembled from a variety of sources, including bond measures passed in 2004 by the towns of Hampton and Hampton Falls and a grant from the federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. The Hurd family has been farming the land since 1926 and decided to seek an agricultural preservation agreement for their property, allowing them to make needed farm upgrades and to continue the family business.

Challenges: Some challenges include water quality issues caused by urban runoff into marshes and water bodies, which can result in shellfish bed closures, management of invasive plant species, especially Common reed (*Phragmites australis)*, and beach erosion and sedimentation. In addition, Hampton's many low-lying areas are susceptible to flood damage and subject to increased risk if sea levels rise to predicted levels during the next 50-100 years.

Changes in the Wind

The passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which outlines a long-term national energy policy, has prompted much talk and heated debate about new energy sources, including offshore wind energy. Proponents say that it is a clean, renewable and domestic source of energy that can help meet the nation's rising demands. However, opponents cite aesthetic issues and bird mortality as major downfalls.

One thing is for sure: reviewing an offshore wind energy proposal is a complicated and involved process. In Massachusetts, the Cape Wind Associates, LLC proposal to construct and operate a wind-powered electrical generating facility on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound has been in the permitting and review process since 2001. If something similar were proposed in New Hampshire, would we be ready?



Offshore wind farm, Denmark.

An offshore wind energy proposal would require an Environmental Impact Statement, an in-depth federal activity, which as of the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior Minerals Management Service. Other major federal players are the Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Key players at the state level would include the Department of Environmental Services NH Coastal Program and Wetlands Bureau, Department of Resources and Economic Development, Fish and Game Department, and the Office of Energy Planning.

No offshore wind proposals have been received in New Hampshire nor are any anticipated in the near future, but if one were, NHCP would be required to conduct a federal consistency review of the project. Under the Coastal Zone Management Act, federal agency activities or activities requiring a federal permit with reasonably foreseeable coastal impacts must be reviewed for consistency with the state's coastal management policies. Potential impacts associated with offshore wind facilities include bird collisions and disruption of recreational and other offshore uses.

Lastly, an offshore wind energy proposal would likely fall under RSA 162-H, Energy Facility Evaluation, Siting, Construction and Operation. Under this statute, a site evaluation committee is responsible for issuing certificates authorizing applicants to proceed with proposed energy facilities as defined in the RSA.

NH Dept. of Environmental Services
NH Coastal Program
29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95
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